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SUBJECT: BRITISH REPORT ON TURKEY/EU DISCUSSIONS WITH FRANCE

Classified By: AMB. ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) According to the British ambassador in Ankara, PM Blair and Chancellor Merkel made little progress with French President Sarkozy in recent discussions regarding Turkey and the EU.

¶2. (C) Blair reportedly talked at length with Sarkozy regarding Turkey during their meeting in early May. He made a detailed pitch for how and why continuing the accession process is in Turkey's interests. Sarkozy was blunt in his reply: he made a campaign commitment and had to stick with it. He made some reference to pursuing privileged partnership via a Mediterranean Union.

¶3. (C) Merkel's approach was tactical. She said she did not want a bad EU Summit in June and implored Sarkozy not to make too much fuss about Turkey. The French president was non-committal and said he would not be able to speak further on the matter until after the mid-June French parliamentary elections.

¶4. (C) The UK ambassador opined that Sarkozy may back off when EU leaders meet -- in order to accommodate Merkel, if nothing else. He expected, however, that the Sarkozy problem will not go away. A key event later in 2007 will be the October-November review of Turkey's EU progress report, which won't be very good anyway. The Brit recommended that President Bush be primed to make the case strongly with Sarkozy on why discontinuing Turkey's EU effort at this time will undermine Western interests, including among moderate Arab and other Islamic world countries.

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